MARITIME SAFETY COMMITTEE
75th session
Agenda item 17

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PREVENTION AND SUPPRESSION OF ACTS OF TERRORISM AGAINST SHIPPING

Seafarer identification

Submitted by the United States

SUMMARY	
Executive summary:	This document provides the United States proposal for seafarer identification to improve maritime security
Action to be taken:	Paragraph 6
Related documents:	MSC 75/17/1

INTRODUCTION

1   The intersessional meeting of the MSC Working Group on Maritime Security (ISWG), which met from 11-15 February 2002, considered a comprehensive set of proposals to improve maritime security submitted by the United States. One of these proposals was to include in SOLAS a requirement for seafarer identification verification.

2   The ISWG agreed that there was a need for an updated seafarer identification document, and that action would be sought through the revision of the International Labor Organization Seafarers' Identity Documents Convention (ILO), 1958 (No.108). Based on this agreement, the ISWG requested the Secretary General to write to the Director-General of the ILO requesting early action on this matter (Plan A). However, the ISWG agreed that it should have a Plan B which would incorporate text for Seafarer Identification Documents into Chapter XI of SOLAS, in case Plan A failed.

3   The United States understands that the ILO Governing Body at its meeting in March agreed to take on the important issue on an expedited basis. The U.S. reaffirms its desire to see tighter regulations and requirements for seafarers identity document, as an important part of the overall improvement in maritime security practices. The U.S. believes that the seafarer identity document requirements must accomplish the following goals:

.1   Positive and Verifiable identification – "Positive" means the document holder is the person whom the document was issued to. "Verifiable" means the validation of the authenticity of the document by a source.

.2   Uniformity – The development of a universal standard to ensure consistent application.

.3   Acceptability – The development of a standard that is convenient, user-friendly, cost effective and does not impair commerce.

.4   Reliability – The development of a standard that works consistently in a practical environment.

.5   Security – The development of a standard that ensures that the system is resistant to compromise.

.6   Interoperability – The development of a standard that allows for the exchange of information among Member States to allow for verification and validation.

4   Furthermore, the United States believes that to accomplish the goals outlined in paragraph 3, the seafarers identity document must have the following elements contained in the document or in the system supporting the document:

.1   digital photograph;

.2   holder's signature;

.3   issuing authority;

.4   proof of nationality;

.5   positive identification of the mariner's qualifications;

.6   permission to enter other countries; and

.7   biometric templates.

5   In addition, the United States also believes the seafarer's identification system must have the capability to gather and exchange information among Member States to assure entry and exit of seafarers is only allowed to those with valid and properly issued documents. In order to facilitate rapid verification of seafarers and their documents on a 24-hour basis, the system must be capable of immediate data access. This data would only contain a limited number of elements in consideration of privacy and system performance issues. It is suggested that the biometric template, developed under the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), could be used in conjunction with elements such as a reference number, seafarer name, card number, and issuing authority. The system should also have the ability to search on this data and prevent duplicate claimed credential information, provide the ability to screen data to identify threats and flag these entries as well as enable off-line card verification.

Actions requested of the Committee

6   The Committee is invited to consider these proposals when considering seafarer identification.

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